DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 228 193 SP 022 027

AUTHOR Buchmann, Margret
TITLE Justification in Teacher Thinking: An Analysis of Interview Data.
INSTITUTION Michigan State Univ., East Lansing. Inst. for Research on Teaching.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO IRT-RS-124
PUB DATE Jan 83
CONTRACT 400-81-0014
NOTE 31p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Decision Making Skills; Elementary Education; *Elementary School Teachers; Professional Autonomy; Professional Development; *Scheduling; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Responsibility; *Teacher Role; *Teaching Styles; Time Blocks; Time Management

ABSTRACT

Evaluated in this study are 20 elementary school teachers' responses to a categorical statement concerning teacher decision-making. The statement used was: "Teaching depends on dividing the school day into chunks of time for each separate subject-matter area." Using the results, the way the 20 teachers talked is described and analyzed, teaching philosophy is explored, and the question of what characterizes professional thinking in teachers is raised. A distinction, based on differing teacher responses in form and content, is drawn between the self-oriented and role-oriented teacher. It was found that role-oriented teachers in this study saw themselves within a larger picture in which colleagues, the curriculum, and accountability figure in some fashion; whereas, self-oriented teachers are seen as being more concerned with actions, feelings, and current classroom realities. The implications of these findings for understanding the professional thinking of teachers are also given consideration. (Author/JM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED228193

Research Series No. 124

JUSTIFICATION IN TEACHER THINKING. AN ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW DATA

Margret Buchmann

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- ✓ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Margret Buchmann
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Published By

The Institute for Research on Teaching
252 Erickson Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1034

January 1983

This work is sponsored by the Institute for Research on Teaching, College of Education, Michigan State University. The Institute for Research on Teaching is funded primarily by the Program for Teaching and Instruction of the National Institute of Education, United States Department of Education. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the position, policy, or endorsement of the National Institute of Education. (Contract No. 400-81-0014)

SP 022 027

Institute for Research on Teaching

The **Institute for Research on Teaching** was founded at Michigan State University in 1976 by the National Institute of Education. Following a nationwide competition in 1981, the NIE awarded a second contract to the IRT, extending work through 1984. Funding is also received from other agencies and foundations for individual research projects.

The IRT conducts major research projects aimed at improving classroom teaching, including studies of classroom management strategies, student socialization, the diagnosis and remediation of reading difficulties, and teacher education. IRT researchers are also examining the teaching of specific school subjects such as reading, writing, general mathematics, and science, and are seeking to understand how factors outside the classroom affect teacher decision making.

Researchers from such diverse disciplines as educational psychology, anthropology, sociology, and philosophy cooperate in conducting IRT research. They join forces with public school teachers, who work at the IRT as half-time collaborators in research, helping to design and plan studies, collect data, analyze and interpret results, and disseminate findings.

The IRT publishes research reports, occasional papers, conference proceedings, a newsletter for practitioners, and lists and catalogs of IRT publications. For more information, to receive a list or catalog, and/or to be placed on the IRT mailing list to receive the newsletter, please write to the IRT Editor, Institute for Research on Teaching, 252 Erickson Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1034.

Co-Directors: Jere E. Brophy and Andrew C. Porter

Associate Directors: Judith E. Lanier and Richard S. Prawat

Editorial Staff
Editor: Janet Eaton
Assistant Editor: Patricia Nischan

Abstract

In an interview study of teacher decision making, researchers asked 20 elementary school teachers about the materials they used in reading and language arts and about the ways in which they organized subject matter in teaching. They also presented the teachers with a categorical statement to which they responded by thinking out loud. The statement read as follows: "Teaching depends on dividing the school day into chunks of time for each separate subject-matter area." This report concerns the rich and varied responses of teachers to this interview item. It is a description and analysis of the way 20 teachers talk, an exploration of teaching philosophy, and it raises the question of what characterizes professional thinking in teachers. Teacher responses to the categorical interview item differed both in form and content. These differences relate to a major distinction in this analysis, that between self-oriented and role-oriented teachers. What united the role-oriented teachers in this study was the fact that they saw themselves within a larger picture in which colleagues, the curriculum, and accountability figured in some fashion. Actions, feelings, and current classroom realities filled out the responses of self-oriented teachers. The implications of these findings for understanding the professional thinking of teachers are discussed.

JUSTIFICATION IN TEACHER THINKING: AN ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW DATA

Margret Buchmann[1]

In an interview study of teacher decision-making, researchers asked 20 elementary school teachers about the materials they used in reading and language arts and about the ways in which they organized subject matter in teaching.[2] They also presented the teachers with a categorical statement to which they responded by thinking out loud. The statement read as follows: "Teaching depends on dividing the school day into chunks of time for each separate subject-matter area." This report concerns the rich and varied responses of teachers to this interview item. It is a description and analysis of the way 20 teachers talk, an exploration of teaching philosophy, and it raises the question of what characterizes professional thinking in teachers.

The categorical statement on teaching was formulated with a view toward stimulating thought in teachers. Unwittingly, it came to express a way of thinking and a point of view on teaching. It asserts something absolutely and positively, without conditions or qualifications. Where it is not shrugged off, such an assertion is liable to provoke--particularly when people are confronted with a categorical statement about their own work. Second, the statement is sharply focused and

---

[1]Margret Buchmann is assistant professor of teacher education in the College of Education at Michigan State University and the coordinator of IRT's Conceptual-Analytic Project. The author wishes to acknowledge and thank Jere Brophy, Robert Floden, Richard Prawat, John Schwille, and Christopher Wheeler for their valuable comments on an earlier version of this paper. She also wishes to thank Mary Mowry for assistance in preparing the manuscript and tables.

[2]The data on which this report is based stem from the work of the Language Arts Project, Institute for Research on Teaching, which was coordinated by William H. Schmidt and Laura Roehler.

limited in what it covers. Third, it suggests a principle of organization that is rigid and fragmented in time.

In effect, this categorical statement gives an apt expression to the way people of thought think about action: abstractly, selectively--yet with a penchant for the general--and without much emotion. People of action focus on particular, concrete phenomena and see things more as a whole. When they think, they meditate action. But for people of thought, life and action are the subject of theories (de Madariaga, 1949).

When confronted, people will explain themselves. Through an implicit, unintended juxtaposition of ways of thinking about teaching, the 20 teachers came to explain and justify their beliefs and practices. Their responses to the categorical interview item differed both in form and content. These differences relate to a major distinction in this analysis: the distinction between self-oriented and role-oriented or collectivity-oriented teachers. Throughout, I quote from the interview protocols to exemplify analytic categories, document associations, and to clarify the differences among teacher responses.

Research Questions and Methods

Teacher responses were considered from a sociological and a philosophical perspective--the first centering on the concept of role, the second on the concept of justification. This approach was chosen because of its fit with the data and its capacity to highlight patterns within and across responses. The underlying notion was to pinpoint differences in teacher thinking that can be considered as significant for the work that teachers do. Overarching research questions were:

> Do teachers think as incumbents of a role and members of a profession or primarily as individuals?

How do the sorts of justifications teachers give for their beliefs and practices fit with distinctive obligations implied by teaching as professional work?

A preliminary reading of the transcribed interviews showed that the styles of teacher speech differed markedly, and in ways that suggested differences in teacher thinking. Thus, the following more specific questions about form and content emerged in the analysis of teacher responses:

Context and style

1. What is the context of the response--personal or role context (self- or collectivity-orientation)?

2. What is the style of the response--anecdotal and concrete, reflective and detached, or imaginative and spontaneous?

Content and point

On what concepts do teacher justifications center? Justifying concepts include:

1. teacher,

2. curriculum (basic skills; subject areas),

3. children (learning and development; needs and interests), and

4. external milieu (social and institutional factors).

The Interview

Teachers were interviewed by educational researchers and research interns collaborating with them in a long-term project in research on teaching. All participating teachers were volunteers, with 250 years of experience to their collective credit (covering a range of 5 to 29 years and averaging about 12 years per teacher). They taught grades 1-6 in urban, suburban, small town, and rural elementary schools in the mid-Michigan area. Within this set of schools, achievement profiles varied between high and low, with half of them average or mixed.

Teachers were fairly evenly distributed over grades 1-5, but only one teacher had a sixth-grade classroom.

Interviewers explained the overall intent of the interview and their interest in exploring teacher thinking. The statement, "Teaching depends on dividing the school day into chunks of time for each separate subject-matter area," was submitted to the teachers on a sheet of paper as part of an interview based on a formal schedule. It was introduced in a standardized fashion and followed by a simulated planning task. Teachers read the statement about teaching and then thought out loud while they considered it. Interviewers used only neutral probes (e.g., "Tell me more") and encouraged teachers to speak while they were thinking. The interview took place under conditions of privacy, and there were no time limits.

Data Analysis

A method of textual analysis and classification was used in coding the taped and transcribed responses to the categorical statement about teaching. Given the exploratory nature of the interview item, teacher responses were initially searched for evocative elements and for ways in which they were different or alike.[3] The categories of analysis emerged, for the most part, from the data.

Evocative elements in the protocols that emphasized the teacher as a person, the teacher's self stimulated an analytic interest in the general context of teacher responses. This emphasis led to a preliminary distinction between self- and role-orientation. It was refined in the light of the data and sociological literature on the professions.

---

[3]The data analysis draws on work in qualitative evaluation (Guba, Note 1; Patton, 1980).

Teacher responses shared a rhetorical orientation toward explanation and justification. Stylistic differences among responses resonated with distinct functions of language--to describe, to evoke, to argue. Teacher responses showed more or less distance to classroom events and the teacher's self. The dimension of distance versus proximity (or immediacy) highlighted formal features of teacher talk across the three response styles designated as anecdotal-concrete, reflective-detached, and imaginative-spontaneous.

Schwab's (1978) commonplaces of education--teacher, student, subject-matter, and milieu--were a starting point for the classification of justifications. These categories carve up the domain of teaching into its major constitutive parts and areas of possible teacher concern. As explained below, these categories were broken down into subcategories where necessary to capture the specific points of teacher justifications.

As these categories and distinctions took shape, interview protocols were analyzed with particular attention to phrases or elements of speech of evocative power. Did they point to a possibly different set of distinctions or changes in classification schemes? Inclusiveness was tested by seeing how many responses (or parts of responses) were assignable to the emerging analytic categories. The internal consistency of distinctions and classification schemes was checked, as well as the extent to which they presented a whole picture when viewed externally. For purposes of data analysis and display, the method of cross-classification was used. In the next section, I will clarify the categories of analysis.

Categories of Analysis

The categories of analysis are roughly divided by their focus on aspects of the form and content of teacher responses. Aspects of form

are (1) the context which teachers assumed in their responses, and (2) the style in which teachers spoke.

The Context of Teacher Responses

Teachers can assume a personal context, or, in contrast, they can think in terms of rights and duties associated with their role. Teachers who commented on the categorical statement by simply stating and describing personal beliefs, feelings, and experiences were classified under the category of personal context. In this frame of reference, the self dominates. Other teacher responses indicated an awareness of common experiences, dispositions, and duties, or of the variability of beliefs and practices within the profession of teaching. These responses were classified under role context.[4]

The content of the teaching role implies distinctive obligations toward others. The collective, and obligations toward it, can be quite concrete (e.g., a teacher's current students and the progress they make in their basal readers). But the collective also figures in concerns for the cultural heritage and the teacher's right and duty to pass on what we as a society know and value. Finally, the community of teachers can provide a collective reference point in teacher thinking, for example, in comments about what teachers in general are doing or what they ought to be doing.

---

[4]The distinction between personal context and role context was formulated by Merton, Fiske, and Kendall (1956). Parsons (1951) makes a similar distinction between "self-orientation" and "collectivity-orientation;" he maintains that the latter is the hallmark of the professional. Parson's criteria of universalism and affective neutrality for professionalism seem, however, too stringent. As Freidson (1970) has argued for the profession of medicine, some degree of self-involvement and affect is consistent with a professional perspective.

Self-orientation, or the assumption of a personal context, stands in tension to role assumption, a sense of collectivity, and an emphasis on obligations toward others. In fact, self-orientation stands in tension to the idea of professionalism.

The Style of Teacher Responses

The styles of teacher responses were identified as (1) anecdotal-concrete, (2) reflective-detached, and (3) imaginative-spontaneous. An anecdotal and concrete style centers on events. A teacher's response is reflective whenever actions and events are thought about. Reflection presupposes some detachment and distance from the self or current events in the classroom. Teachers who speak in an imaginative and spontaneous fashion convey a sense of free-flowing classroom life and, incidentally, of themselves. Both the anecdotal-concrete and the imaginative-spontaneous styles are characterized by proximity to the self or events, with the imaginative-spontaneous style showing a higher degree of emotional involvement. Categories of style also relate to different ways in which teachers see their work: as a series of actions followed by more action; as action (intermittently) followed by thought, and as a "natural" event colored by affect.[5] Thus, some characteristics of form and content are intrinsically related.

Content and Point of Teacher Responses

Aspects of the content of teacher responses were captured in concepts that identify the focal point of teacher justifications within

---

[5]The imaginative-spontaneous response style may express what Darling-Hammond and Wise (Note 2) call the "spontaneous theory of teaching."

the response. These concepts are briefly characterized below and will be exemplified by excerpts from teacher responses.

Justifying concepts. The child and the curriculum are obvious concepts in explaining what teachers do and what it is good for. Subcategories for child-centered justifications were "learning and development" and "needs and interests" (see Bussis, Amarel, & Chittenden, 1976). Thinking about learning and development highlights the potential for desirable change in children, but talk about needs and interests takes its cues from their present states.[6] Curriculum-centered justifications can be distinguished by an emphasis on basic skills (i.e., spelling, reading, computation) or subject areas (i.e., science, mathematics, art). Thus both sets of subcategories point to significantly different teacher concerns that cluster around the justifying concepts of "curriculum" and "children."

"Teacher" and "external milieu" were included as further concepts that could be invoked in justification. For, on the one hand, benefits cited in explaining what teachers do may refer to teachers themselves. On the other hand, justifications can invoke social and institutional constraints that are part of the milieu of schooling ("external milieu"). Table 1 below shows the coding scheme with all categories of analysis.

---

[6]Children's needs and interests are, however, not necessarily relevant to worthwhile learning experiences (Dearden, 1972; Peters, 1978).

Table 1

Categories of Analysis

Response Context	
Personal (Self-Orientation)	Role (Collect.-Orientation)

Response Style		
Anecdotal-Concrete	Reflective-Detached	Imaginative-Spontaneous

Justifying Concepts					
Teacher	Curriculum		Children		External Milieu
	Basic Skills	Subject Areas	Learn. & Dev.	Needs & Int.	

The category of role context or collectivity-orientation is central to the analysis and to the question of what we can regard as professional thinking in teachers. I will therefore begin with a documentation of this stance by excerpts from interview protocols.

Role Context and Collectivity-Orientation

Teacher responses could be distinguished by self- as opposed to collectivity-orientation, or by the choice of a personal context as opposed to a role context. Teachers who spoke out of a personal context had a limited frame of reference, even where speech was imaginative and rich. Current classroom realities or the teacher's actions and feelings filled out the response. A sense of professional community was not apparent. One was afforded a glimpse "behind the classroom doors," but ordinarily these doors seemed closed.

The frame of reference of teachers who assumed a role context in their responses was more inclusive in several ways. There was a sense of obligation, of diversity in beliefs and practices, or of shared dis-

positions and experiences within the profession of teaching. The following three excerpts exemplify these aspects of role context.

Peggy[7] rejected the categorical statement because she felt that acting on it would keep her from covering the requisite content. She also thought of the teacher next in line and of her obligation to assure continuity in content coverage.

> There are times when I've run out of time in the school year. I can think of an example right now. I'm not going to get to a math topic that we have left. One more book left. And I have to try to get across the concepts that are covered in that book without going through the book. So I have to try to include that in other areas of what I am doing. *I don't feel comfortable not teaching it and having the second-grade teacher expect that it was covered.* (pp. 31-32)

Paul voiced different thoughts after considering the categorical statement about teaching; yet he also assumed a role context. He said, among other things,

> I guess that I don't think that teaching depends on that, but I think that is a *way* of teaching the children during the course of a day. *But teaching could be carried on in a variety of other ways.* (p. 26)

The particular interest of Paul's response lies in the fact that he was the only teacher who taught essentially by dividing up the day into chunks of time for each subject. As will be shown below, he favored a structured approach to teaching because of its benefits for children who need to learn how to learn. But, although Paul felt that what he did was right, he had at the same time a sense of alternatives that allowed him to see his own classroom practice in perspective.

---

[7]All teacher names are same-sex code names. Excerpts from the responses are unedited, except for the deletion of repetitions and "uh's." Page numbers refer to the interview protocols; all emphases in the excerpts are mine.

Pat, finally, believed she could speak for most teachers when she described the influence of students on interactive content-decisions as follows:

> And if I get to a point and the kids are excited, I say "Forget it." You know, the next thing goes out the window. *I think most teachers kind of go on that basis.* (p. 34)

Note the reference to the states of children and its use in justification. The account of patterns of action is followed by a generalization about teachers. This response is collectivity-oriented in context and reflective in style. In the next section, I will discuss associations of response contexts and styles. These associations characterize the form of teacher responses.

Context and Style of Teacher Responses

The teachers studied were almost evenly divided between collectivity- and self-orientation; that is, about half of the respondents assumed a role context, while the other half spoke out of a personal context. Frames of reference were associated with styles of speech in the following ways. Responses that were anecdotal and concrete in style (six) were, without exception, personal in context. The same was true for teachers who spoke in a spontaneous, imaginative manner (three). But responses that showed some degree of detachment (11) were always characterized by a collective frame of reference, or the assumption of a role context.

Role-oriented teachers taught at the different levels of elementary schooling represented in the study, but so did self-oriented teachers. This lends support to the notion that, for these 20 teachers, role-orientation was not just a matter of teaching at higher grade levels, and vice versa. Nor did it appear that role-orientation simply came with gaining more classroom experience. Self-oriented teachers in this study

had from 6 to 26 years of teaching experience, and their role-oriented peers from 5 to 29 years. In fact, the role-oriented teachers were, on the average, *less* experienced than teachers who assumed a personal context in their responses (10 versus 15.5 years). This tendency shows again--and in a different way--that experience in itself did not make these teachers more disposed to assume a role context.

Table 2 summarized the associations of contexts and styles of teacher responses. It also shows how degrees of action-orientation, or the extent to which responses refer to doing concrete things, were distributed over the responses with their different contexts.

Table 2

Context and Style of Teacher Responses

	Anecdotal-Concrete			Reflective-Detached			Imaginative-Spontaneous		
	Action-Orientation			Action-Orientation			Action-Orientation		
	low	mod.	high	low	mod.	high	low	mod.	high
Personal Context (Self-Orientation)		Helen Margaret Mary	Helen Linda Mick					Martha	Kate Rita
Role Context (Collectivity-Orientation)				Donna Doreen Gladys Pat Paul Peggy	Barbara George Judy	Diane Len			

Action-orientation (low, moderate, or high) was assessed as a global response characteristic.[8] On the whole, the collectivity-

[8]The data were also coded for their depth and specificity (see Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, 1956); on both of these global characteristics, teacher responses were judged as almost evenly divided between "moderate" and "high." The modal response length was between one and two double-spaced typed pages; with six responses being between two and seven, and six responses being up to one page long. All teacher responses to the categorical statement about teaching thus allowed appreciable insights into affective and cognitive meanings.

oriented (style: reflective-detached) teachers tended toward a lower, and the self-oriented teachers (style: anecdotal-concrete or imaginative-spontaneous) toward a higher action-orientation in their responses. Since action-orientation refers to the degree that the teacher's response is about doing concrete things, these associations are not surprising. The two reflective, collectivity-oriented teachers with high action-orientation, Diane and Len, are noteworthy exceptions. Their responses were reflections on the particular--long on descriptions of classroom practice and on insights that were specific.

To exemplify the associations of contexts and styles of teacher responses, some interview excerpts are discussed below. After reading the categorical statement about teaching and the school day, George, for example, made the following observations:

> I think you literally try to put it [the day] into chunks and intend to do something that you can label English in that chunk. Do some science in that space of time--but you have other needs, you've compressed certain things, you expand certain things, and *you hope that you are doing a good job so you eventually balance it out, so that every area gets adequate coverage.* (p. 50)

Classrooms are places where things often do not work out as planned. However, there is no independent value to the adaptiveness and responsiveness of teachers. As George saw, the changes made in plans eventually have to pass the test of appropriate content coverage across subjects over time. This is a test with universal requirements based on a sense of professional obligation.

And Pat argued, also reflectively:

> I think, you know, a greater amount of teaching goes on if you can integrate and make it kind of flow, where you hit many subject areas and control the similarities and differences throughout the day. Now math, I still haven't been able to do that. (p. 34)

This teacher monitored and judged her own teaching in light of a vision of effective practice. She saw that she could not yet realize her vision in mathematics. In the remark that Pat volunteered, this does not come through as a problem that betrays incompetence. Rather, what she "still could not do" appears to be a challenge. Pat's response conveys detachment as well as a long-term goal for professional improvement.

Other teachers spoke, however, in a different vein, relating things that were done in the classroom in a serial fashion. Mick's response was classified as anecdotal and concrete. The following excerpt illustrates this style:

> This spring, we did our play. I had a couple of things I wanted to make sure we did those days. We did em. And at ten o'clock, we started play practice the rest of the day. First of all, we went through and made sure we made costumes for it. Then we went ahead and started practicing our lines. Then we went and rehearsed it once. And then we put the costumes on and went through a dress rehearsal. (p. 117)

True to the facts, this detailed narrative gives no sense of what could or should be. An immediate reality fills out the response, and no distance to it is apparent. Neither the mental life of the teacher nor classroom life become vivid.

Rita's response to the categorical statement, on the other hand, was expressive of self, evocative of classroom life, spontaneous and imaginative:

> Everything hinges on everything else. It ain't no fun to isolate everything. It's much more funner to put it all together. It really is. I'm thinking, too, of a game. . . . there is a book, easy reading book. Fonsil puts it out. It's called Piggle. And we love to play Piggle. It's a rhyming game. And when you catch on to it, you can make up any words you want to. All nonsense words or really truly words. And the idea is just to change the initial consonant. For instance, Barbara, larbara, marbara, carbara. *And just have a real bang up time with it . . .* If your name is Barbara, you get to be special for today

> because our letter is B and that's Bobby Bubblesby. We all get to chew bubble gum and make big bubbles and make Bobby Bubble and reinforce that B scund. . . . I just threw this out. (p. 22)

Her own classroom, her own self comes alive in Rita's response. There is a vision of classroom life that rests on a notion of wholeness. To the extent that there is a sense of purpose, it is almost absorbed into the idea of having a good time. In Rita's response, immediate reality also dominates. There is no distance out of which questions could be asked.[9]

What the teacher justifications referred to and how the manner of speech was associated with the point of responses is at issue in the following section. Role- and self-oriented teachers favored different sorts of justifications for their practices and beliefs.

Content and Point of Teacher Responses: Justifying Concepts

What do I do, why do I do it, and what is it good for? As they considered the categorical statement about teaching, teachers formulated answers to this implicit question.

Teacher-centered justifications. Mick explained how acting on the categorical statement, "Teaching depends on dividing the school

---

[9]Another response with the same style stresses the "natural" flow of classroom events. Thus Kate explained her rejection of the views put forth in the interview item as follows" "I don't like this 'divided up into different chunks.' If something is really--if it's flowing and it's going good, I don't want to stop that chunk and say, 'Alright kids, we've got to put this away. So you don't have your address on it. I'm sorry, it's 9:05 and we've got to go to something else.' No, if that's flowing good, go on to that. Maybe tomorrow we'll be into the math and something will really be going good there and I don't want to stop that and go on to social studies. . . .You have to feel that if things are flowing, and you have to know when to stop it. Say, hey, it's out of hand and let's go to something else and flow into that." (p. 26)

day into chunks of time for each separate subject-matter area," can do something for the teacher:

> And it helps the teacher to insure--to keep ya--what you might say--on a line and not getting off on a tangent somewhere and losing your way completely. It gives you a path to follow or where you need to back to. *It gives you--helps you go along,* because doing the same subjects every day, five days a week for the number of weeks we do it, things can get stale, you know what I mean? (p. 115)

But Martha said, in rejecting the same statement:

> I found that whatever seemed to come up at that time. . . . If we were working on a big social studies project that we were doing--a lot of the time I'd work everything around that, rather than say that every day we had to do a certain thing at a certain time. So everything kinda just flowed, and what came came naturally or what seemed to follow. (p. 23)

She concluded with, "I, you know, I'm not a chunk-of-time person" (p. 23), while stating (without apparent concern) that her spontaneous approach to teaching might "blow the minds" of some kids.

Both of these justifications focus on the teacher. The first stresses the teacher's need for guidelines and routines to get through the days that come one after the other in monotonous succession. The second teacher justifies her spontaneous approach to teaching by reference to herself as a person: I do what I do because I am the kind of person I am. She implies that this justifies what she is doing. While the first statement is true (as far as it goes), the second is not.

The appropriateness of professional action is a matter of standards by definition applicable across people. States and traits of the self can render action comprehensible, but they cannot legitimize it. Nor need they contribute to making teachers better at their work. It is, for example, not defensible to spend less instructional time on mathematics just because one doesn't like this subject; and the need for some

planning on the part of the teacher cannot--justifiably--be dismissed because of its inconsistency with a personal philosophy of life. The considerable power of teachers is used legitimately when teachers deal with all their charges as learners. And what helps a teacher through the days may, or may not, coincide with what will help children to learn.[10]

Child-centered justifications. Diane saw children's learning as the heart of the matter and discussed the interview item from this vantage point:

> If you chunk it [the school day by subjects] you can be sure--you can say you've got to everything. But I also say that if you chunk it you might get to everything, but not much might have settled in. (p. 11)

Diane's observations stand in contrast to Mick's comments. He considered teacher needs. Diane starts out--already removed from personal considerations--by thinking about the curriculum and covering all subjects. Then she takes her reflections one step further: What will be the consequences of acting on the categorical statement for student learning?[11] Covering all subjects is no self-justifying goal. One might cover all subjects, devoting appropriate amounts of time to all of them, but that still does not settle the question of what children have actually learned. Thus, strategies which promote adequate content coverage are no good unless they also promote student learning.

---

[10]The following statement by Highet (1966) exemplifies the shift of focus from the teacher's self and its states to students, a shift liable to advance professional goals in teaching. He writes, "You must think, not what you know, but what they do not know; not what you find hard, but what they find hard; after putting yourself inside their minds, obstinate or puzzled, groping or mistaken as they are, explain what they need to learn" (p. 280).

[11]This teacher is one of the two cases in which reflective speech was associated with a high action-orientation.

As pointed out earlier, Paul saw himself as a teacher who taught by chunking time and content, arguing that this practice helped to develop learning to learn skills. He was aware of possible factors in the backgrounds of children that prepare them unequally for dealing with "invisible pedagogies" (Bernstein, 1975), or with open and unstructured classrooms:

> And I guess that comes from the background--maybe they're not getting that in their background, the organization and planning, and maybe they are. But I think that the kids need to know what's going to be going on and how long it's going to last and what's going to be next. So I guess in that respect, that's why I do it. (p. 28)

In explaining his commitment to a visible, highly structured pedagogy, Paul concluded, "Yeah. It teaches them organization, right. And it also gives them all the information that they'll need for the day" (p. 29). He saw time segmentation not as an end in itself, but as a means for achieving student independence and equal educational opportunity in his classroom. In the last analysis, Paul's way of organizing the school day is based on a vision of equitable classroom teaching, a vision with long-term implications for student learning.

Justification in terms of children's needs and interests took, in one instance, the shape of a "school to life" argument. Thus Margaret commented after reading the categorical statement about teaching:

> I agree and I disagree with that. I like being able to say that I'm having language arts in the morning . . . I also like to have a math time, I like to have a social studies and science time in the afternoon. But I also feel very strongly that all those topics can be integrated and that they *have* to be integrated. Because when you get out of school, life is integrated. *Life is not math, you know, reading, it's all that stuff together.* (p. 22)

It cannot be assumed, however, that patterns of effective or of worthwhile learning in classrooms mirror the patterns of future experiences

that children are expected to have. That is, just because arithmetic and reading skills may be used concomitantly in real life, it does not follow that they are best learned together. Nor is it clear that all learning goals can be derived from the way things are--or appear to the teacher.

After Linda had read the categorical statement about teaching, she stated flatly, "I don't do that . . . the child will simply become frustrated" (p. 41). She argued that children need larger and more flexible time chunks in the school day and said, with great emphasis, "And I would still do the same thing, ever if I had some youngsters in here who don't function at that top level like society expects them to do" (p. 42). Yet the short-term frustrations of children are an uncertain guide to appropriate goals and procedures in classroom teaching. Also, compare Linda's outright decision to disregard the potential needs of some children with Paul's determination to teach all children how to learn.

Curriculum-centered justification. These justifications focused, (with one problematic exception) on the subject areas, or on curricular content including more than the skills subsumed under the three R's. In other words, teaching and learning the basics were not treated as self-justifying. George, for example, held his content goals steady; he justified his classroom practices by reference to the growth of knowledge and understanding. In illustrating his intentional use of difficult words in instruction, he explained,

> I might immediately, in italics [at the blackboard], use another meaning of the word which might be more familiar. But other than that, I try to use my own vocabulary and have them rise to it, pointing out that I could have said this other--*but I'd like you to know.* We always start the year with the word "truculent." That always grabs them, because I want them to know what truculent is, and want them to love words. (p. 54)

Another teacher made an argument for some structure, if not for rigid chunking. In giving a curriculum-centered justification, Judy spoke of "math time," "reading time," "language time," science and social studies, to sum up as follows, "But I think you need a basic structure, so that you're getting really it all in" (p. 17). Here the point of structure is to make sure everything gets covered--not so much to help the teacher through the days, or to teach kids to be organized so that they can learn.

Thus, teachers invoked different concepts in justifying their beliefs and practices. And, as Table 3 shows, the particular concepts they invoked distinguished teachers who were self- from teachers who were collectivity-oriented in their responses.

Table 3

Response Contexts and Justifying Concepts

	Teacher	Curriculum		Children		External Milieu
		Basic Skills	Subj. Areas	Learn & Dev.	Needs &Int.	
Personal Context (Self-Orientation)	Martha Helen Mick	(Betty)[1]		Kate Rita	Margaret Mary Linda	
Role Context (Collectivity-Orientation)			George Len Donna Gladys Peggy Barbara	Paul Judy Diane	Doreen Pat	

[1]The assignment of this teacher to a justifying category is somewhat problematical on the basis of the data.

Most of the teachers who showed an awareness of impersonal obligation, of the larger professional reference group, and of the variability of beliefs and practices within it, relied on either the subject areas of the curriculum (six) or the learning and development of children (three) in justification. Though two of these role-oriented

teachers invoked children's needs and interests, none of the 11 teachers was prepared to focus on the teacher in justification. It is not surprising that all teachers who centered on benefits for themselves in justification chose a personal frame of reference in their responses. But it is noteworthy that not one of the self-oriented teachers saw curricular subjects as capable of justifying what teachers do. In fact, if one discounts the (problematic) assignment of one of these teachers to the basics category, one can say that *none of the teachers who spoke from a personal context relied on the curriculum in justification.* Thus, what seemed permissible and appropriate in justification distinguished between self-oriented and collectivity-oriented teachers.

Teachers who justified their practices and beliefs by reference to the curriculum literally taught anywhere from first to sixth grade (first, second, third/fourth split, fourth/fifth split, fifth, and sixth grade). Their teaching experience ranged from 7 to 29 years, with an average of 11.5 years. Hence, for the teachers studied, a tendency to invoke the curriculum in justification could not be predicted on the basis of teaching experience or grade levels.[12]

The External Milieu and Teacher Justifications

Though four teachers mentioned the external milieu in their responses, none of the teachers studied used social and institutional constraints in justification. This may be due to the particular type

---

[12]Neither could curriculum-centered justifications be predicted from available achievement data. Actually, none of the teachers who invoked the subject areas of the curriculum in explaining their beliefs and practices taught in schools with achievement profiles tending toward the higher end of the spectrum (four taught in average, and two in lower-achievement schools).

of implied question that teachers associated with the categorical statement. In giving his curriculum-centered justification, Len, for instance, described the educational program he was planning for the next school year.[13] Then he committed the following reflections to tape:

> We're forced to use the ax in a day with all the things that are part of the curriculum. I think that's part of our--the reason for our ineffectiveness in elementary [school] is *they keep loading the curriculum and cutting down on time.* And so I--we're going to have to teach the curriculum all the time without any specific time for this subject, this subject, this subject. And I think the more we can do that, I think the greater process a kid is going to make in *true education, getting those things.* (p. 45)

Thus Len was aware of the influence of the external milieu. "Using the ax," or chunking time by subjects, appears to be something that teachers are forced to do. But Len outflanked this constraint by simply being more determined about doing what he was inclined to do anyway: giving kids "true education" by teaching everything all of the time.

Professional Thinking in Teachers: Looking Outward or Inward?

In moral theory, professional thinking is distinguished from the reasoning of laypeople by its reliance on "overriding considerations" (Goldman, 1980) to justify professional conduct. The preservation of life is such a consideration for physicians. Other people need not agree with professionals on what is of supreme importance. This fact, however, does

---

[13]Len was the second teacher whose response was reflective and high on action-orientation.

not decrease the relevance and power of overriding considerations for professional practice.

In teaching, overriding considerations have to do with helping people learn things that are worthwhile. Thus, justifications that center on the curriculum and students' learning and development fit well with the overriding considerations of teaching as professional work. These considerations distinguish teaching from everyday communication and relationships by their focus on educational content and intended learning (Abunin, 1977; Hawkins, 1974).

What united the role- or collectivity-oriented teachers in this study was the fact that they saw themselves within a larger picture in which colleagues, the curriculum, and accountability figured in some fashion. These teachers did not refer to themselves in justifying their beliefs and practices. That is not to say that they had no personal interests or beliefs which influenced what they taught and how they taught it. But they still felt bound to obligations; the personal element in their responses was framed by a sense of impersonal duties.

In emphasizing the curriculum and children's learning, the justifications that predominated among role-oriented teachers had a good fit with the overriding considerations of the teaching profession. These teachers looked outward rather than inward and favored a long-term over a short-term view. Their detachment from the self, habitual practices, and immediate classroom realities created a space in which they could ask questions, see alternatives, and confront the real with the possible. Role-oriented teachers saw that neither personal preferences and characteristics nor established habits in classroom teaching can legitimate what teachers do and how they go about it.

Self-oriented teachers in this study did not place themselves within a larger picture in which colleagues, the curriculum, and accountability were prominent. In fact, they did not focus on the curriculum in justification, although a number of them invoked children's needs and learning in explaining their practices and beliefs. Nevertheless, self-oriented teachers spoke from a personal frame of reference in anecdotal and spontaneous ways. Actions, feelings, and current classroom realities filled out their responses. In cases where they recognized that the needs of some children might not be met by their approach to teaching, self-oriented teachers would still justify what they were doing by reference to personal characteristics and habitual ways of working.

For professionals, this kind of reasoning is problematic. In an important sense, it is irrelevant to teaching as professional work what one likes and doesn't like. Professional thinking comes more from saying, "This is the kind of work I am doing," than from stating, This is the kind of person I am." It is thus inappropriate for teachers to justify their behavior in terms of personal preferences and characteristics, or habitual ways of working.

Where teachers see classroom realities or their behavior as "natural" and inevitable, they take no responsibility and need not consider change. It is precisely this retreat from responsibility and the possibility of alternatives that marks the divide between self- and role-oriented teachers in this study. More important even than current effectiveness is the degree to which teachers are susceptible and responsive to new data--based on student behavior, the advice of colleagues, the knowledge of teacher educators and researchers, or the evolving standards of the field which give expression to its overriding considerations. Self-orientation blocks the flow of speculation, conversation, and reflection

by which we shape and scrutinize habits of action and mind. For the improvement of classroom practice, looking beyond the self makes all the difference.

Reference Notes

1. Guba, E.G. Toward a methodology of naturalistic inquiry in educational evaluation (CSE Monograph Series in Evaluation No. 8). Los Angeles, California: Center for the Study of Evaluation, University of California, 1978.

2. Darling-Hammond, L., & Wise, A.E. A conceptual framework for examining teachers' views of teaching and educational policies (N-1668-FF). Santa Monica, California: Rand, 1981. (Prepared for the Ford Foundation)

References

Abunin, J. Teaching and personal relationships. Educational Theory, 1977, 27(4), 297-303.

Bernstein, B. Class, codes and control (Vol. 3). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975.

Bussis, A.M., Chittenden, E.A., & Amarel, M. Beyond surface curriculum: An interview study of teachers' understandings. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1976.

Dearden, R.F. 'Needs' in education. In R.F. Dearden, P.H. Hirst, & R.S. Peters (Eds.), Education and the development of reason. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972.

de Madariaga, S. Englishmen, Frenchmen, Spaniards. London: Oxford University Press, 1949. (First pubished in 1928)

Freidson, E. Profession of medicine: A study of the sociology of applied knowledge. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.

Goldman, A.H. The moral foundations of professional ethics. Totowa, New Jersey: Rowan and Littlefield, 1980.

Hawkins, D. I, thou, and it. In D. Hawkins (Ed.), The informed vision: Essays on learning and human nature. New York: Agathon Press, 1974.

Highet, G. The art of teaching. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966.

Merton, R.K., Fiske, M., & Kendall, P.L. The focused interview: A manual of problems and procedures. Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1956.

Parsons, T. The social system. Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1951.

Patton, M.Q. Qualitative evaluation methods. Beverly Hills, California: Sage, 1980.

Peters, R.S. Ethics and education. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1978.

Schwab, J.J. The practical: Translation into curriculum. In I. Westbury & N.J. Wilkof (Eds.), Science, curriculum, and liberal education. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978.